

**SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR UTILIZING DIRECT USER SIGNALING TO  
ENHANCE FAULT TOLERANT H.323 SYSTEMS**

**ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE**

An H.323 client terminal (102) according to an embodiment of the invention employs primary and secondary H.323 control units or state machines (110a, 110b). The primary control unit (110a) sends signaling messages to a primary gatekeeper (108a) and triggers the secondary control unit (110b) to send a message with an appropriate correlation identifier directly to a second client terminal. The primary control unit (110a) establishes a call per standard H.323 protocols. The secondary control unit (110b) also establishes a direct signaling connection to the second client terminal as back up. However, no media channels are established for this backup signaling. The secondary control unit (110b) checks the status of the call with the primary control unit (110a). If the call signaling on the primary control unit (110a) is proceeding normally, no further action is taken. If the call signaling with the primary gatekeeper (108a) fails, the secondary control unit (110b) takes over the signaling communication via the direct signaling channel.